

A background image showing a group of graduates in caps and gowns. In the foreground, a young man in a grey gown and cap is smiling, and a young man in a maroon gown and cap is looking forward. Other graduates are visible in the background.

Lowell Public Schools

Update on Student Assignment Policy Analysis K-4 Data Review and Findings

January 28, 2021



Our Fundamental Commitments to Equity

- Eliminate the racial, ethnic and linguistic achievement and opportunity gaps among all students
- Provide equitable funding and resources among the district's diverse schools
- Engage all families with courtesy, dignity, respect and cultural understanding

Guiding Questions

- Does our current school assignment policy result in equitable student distribution across race, language, economic status, gender and other demographic factors?
- Does our current school assignment policy result in equitable access for all student demographics to programs and choice opportunities across our district?
- Does our current school assignment policy perpetuate inequalities across our schools?
- How do we make all schools equally desirable for all students? How do we shift misperceptions of some schools?

Agenda

1. Reiterate the desired outcomes driving the process
2. Provide a brief overview of current elementary school landscape
3. Compare the current elementary enrollment with the projected enrollment based on parent school assignment (school assignment based)
4. Current Learnings
5. Research and Policy Considerations Based on Current Learnings
6. Limitations of the Current Data and Direction of Final Data Review Prior to a Recommendation for March 3
7. Next Steps
 - Process
 - Timeline

Desired Outcomes

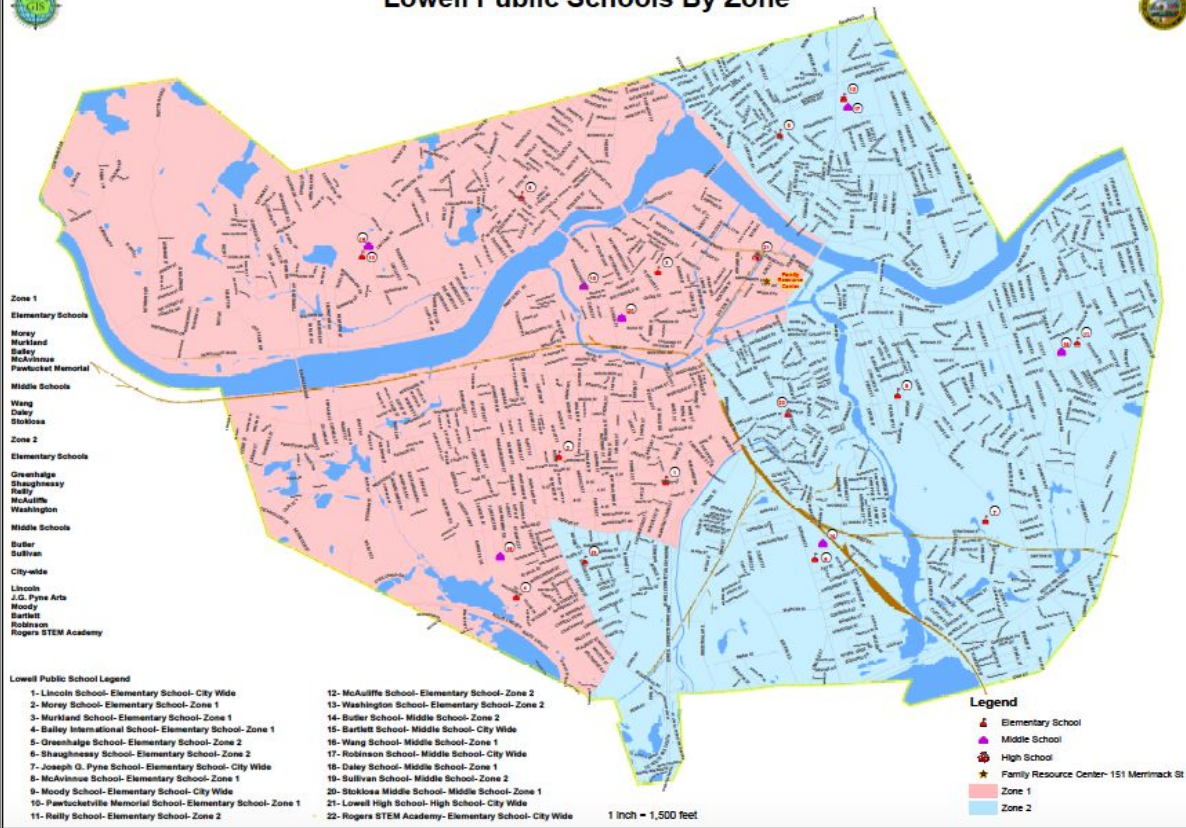
1. For all students to attend schools that are reflective of Lowell's rich diversity (race, language, culture, socio economics, etc.)
2. For all students and families to have satisfaction in their school assignment in meeting their needs as learners and community members
3. For all students to have access to the wide range of quality services and programs across schools

Current Lowell Public Schools Elementary Landscape

- 15 elementary programs
- Organized into two zones with city-wide options: Zone 1; Zone 2
- Current feeder patterns



Lowell Public Schools By Zone



SENDER SCHOOLS

RECEIVER SCHOOLS

West (Zone I)

Murkland School

Stoklosa School

Lincoln School (West, Zone I)

Moody (West, Zone I)

McAvinnue School

Wang School

Pawtucketville Memorial School

Bailey School

Daley School

Morey School

SENDER SCHOOLS

RECEIVER SCHOOL

East (Zone II)

Greenhalge School

Robinson School *

McAuliffe School

***Robinson School is a citywide school**

Shaughnessy School

Butler School

Washington School

Reilly School

Sullivan School

Lincoln School (East, Zone II)

Moody School (East Zone II)

SENDER SCHOOLS

Citywide

Bartlett Community Partnership School

Pyne Arts School

Rogers STEM Academy

RECEIVER SCHOOL

Bartlett Community Partnership School

Pyne Arts School

Rogers STEM Academy

Limitations of the Data

1. Our data is constantly being updated as students either move in or out of the district or between schools. The data that we present today, is a snapshot of the current enrollment, however this will keep changing.
2. Brazilian students will be identified within the “white, non-Hispanic” student group; however, many have linguistic needs that differ from the English-dominant, white-non Hispanic students who also are counted within this racial/ethnic grouping.
3. The data presented includes distribution to students in city-wide schools as assigned by proximity to school when in reality they have special factors, such as transportation and magnet programs, which currently impact their school assignment.

Overall K-4 Demographics



Pre-K to 4 Parent School Study

21/22 GR

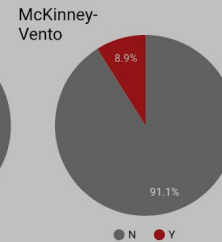
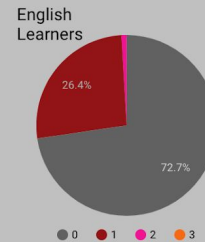
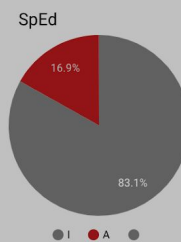
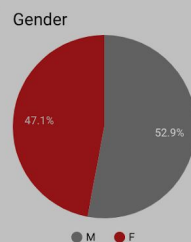
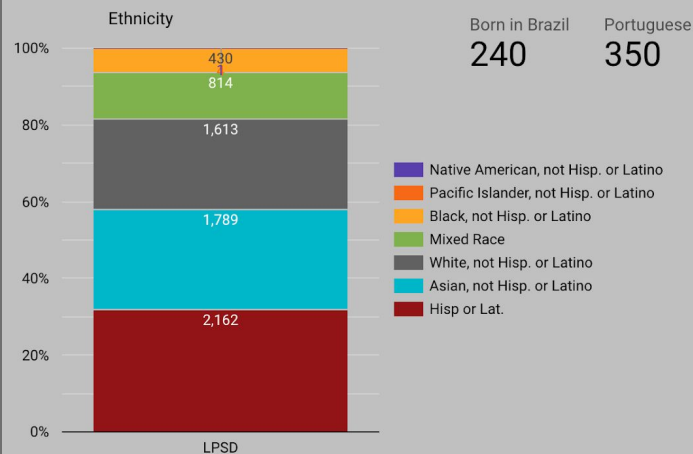
Socio-Economic

McKinney-Vento

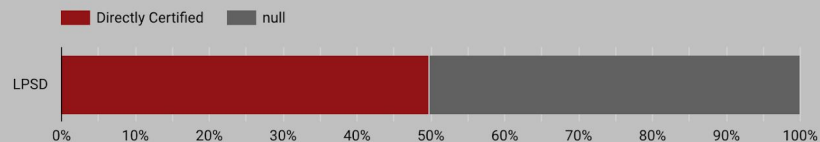
Students

6,813

20/21 Demographics



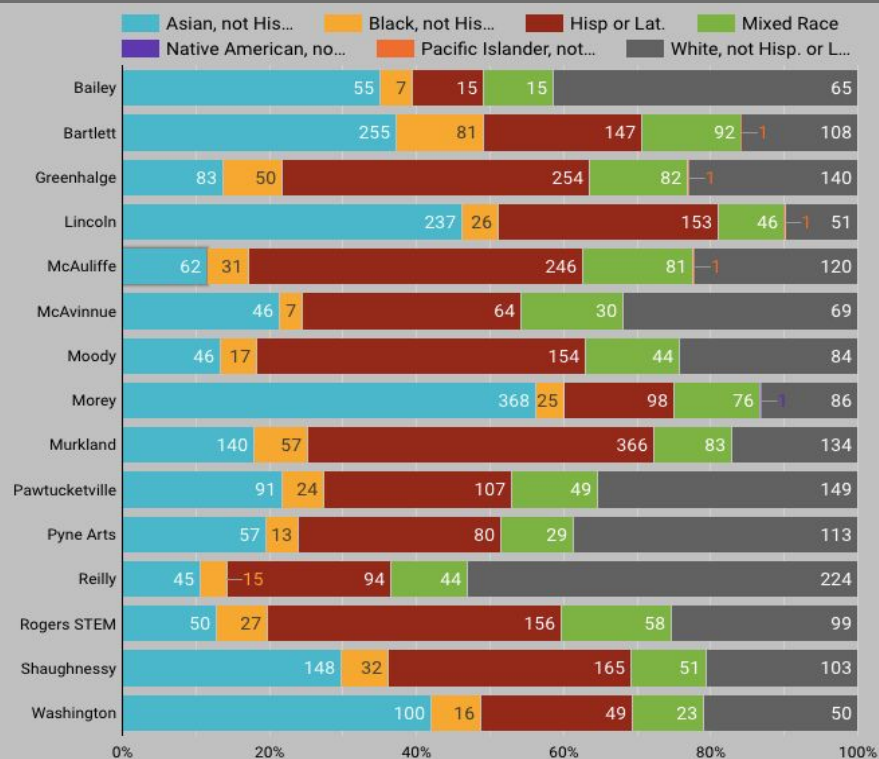
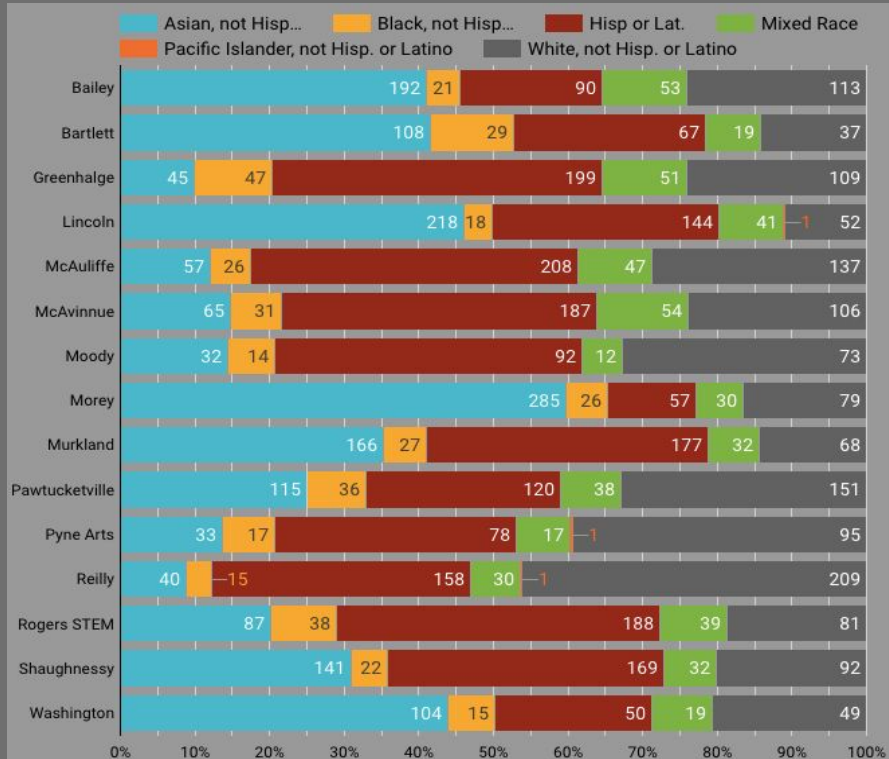
Socio-Economic



Elementary Data Disaggregated by Race/Ethnicity

Current 2020-21 Enrollment

Projected Enrollment Based on School-home Proximity



English Learner Demographics



Pre-K to 4 Parent School Study

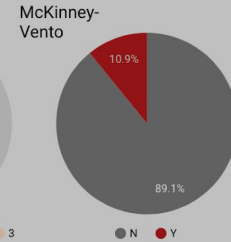
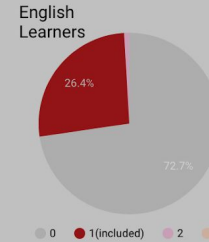
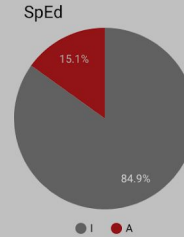
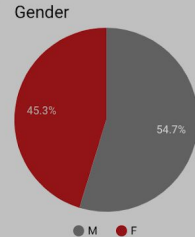
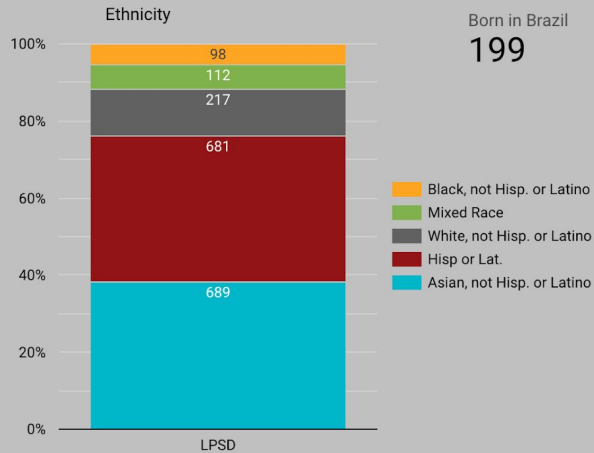
21/22 GR

Socio-Economic

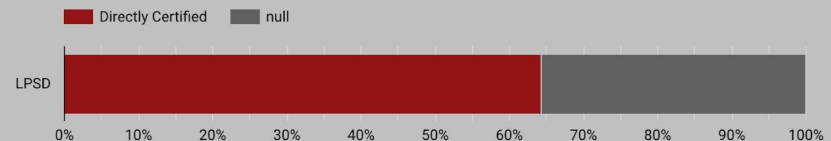
McKinney-Vento

Students
1,797

20/21 Demographics

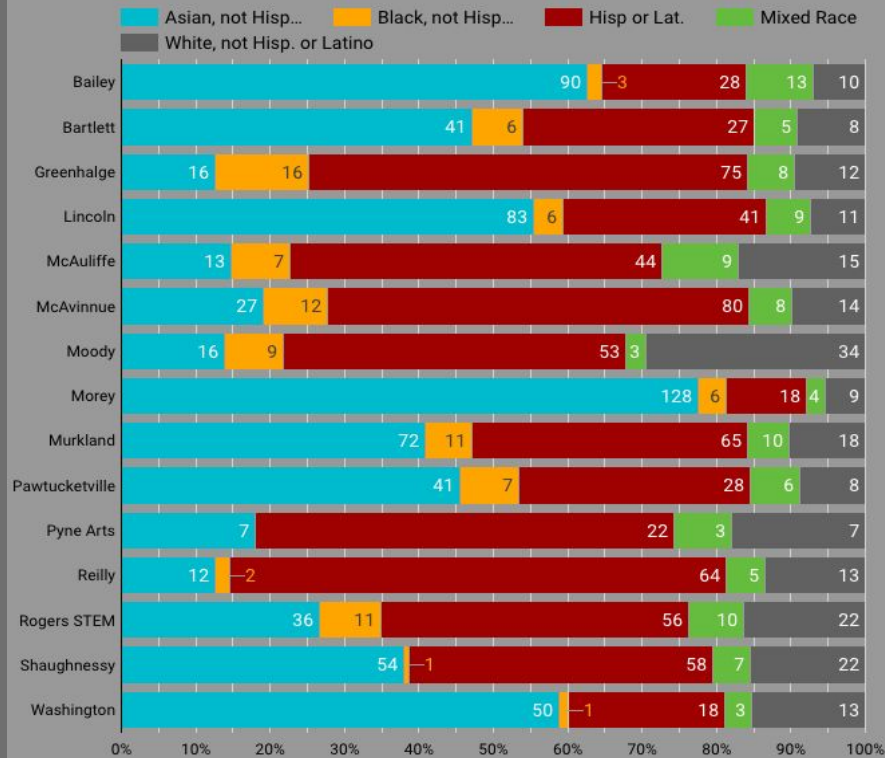


Socio-Economic

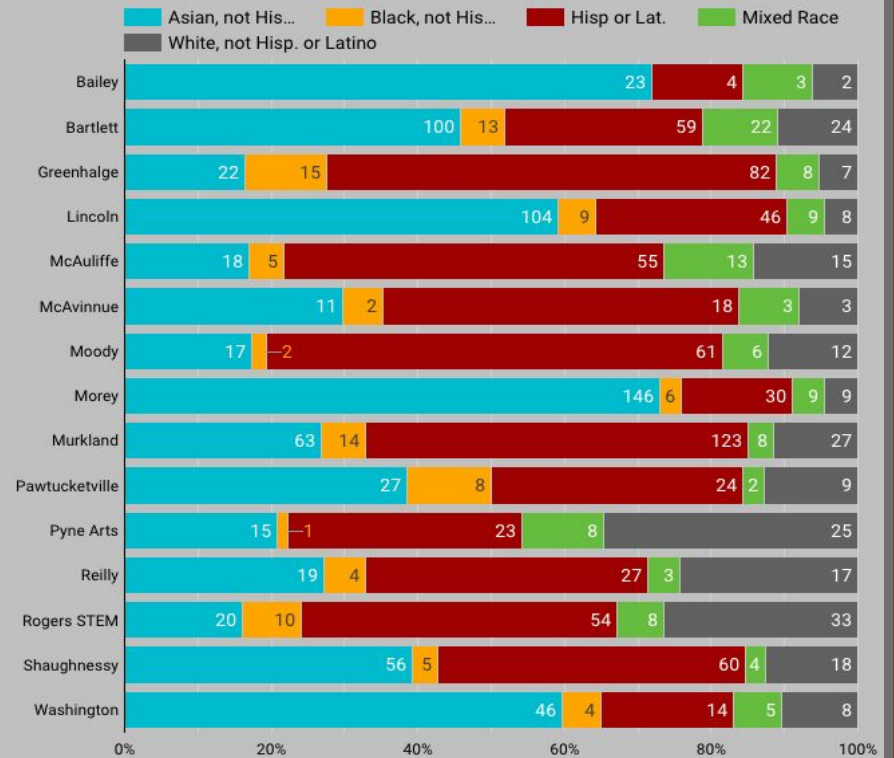


English Learner Race/Ethnicity Assignment Data

Current 2020-21 Enrollment



Projected Enrollment Based on School-home Proximity



McKinney Vento - Homeless Services Student Demographics



Pre-K to 4 Parent School Study

21/22 GR

Socio-Economic

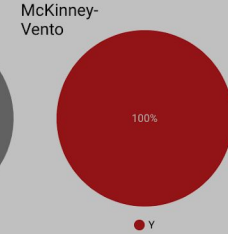
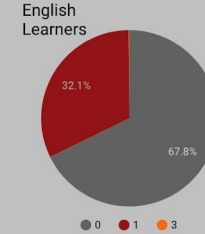
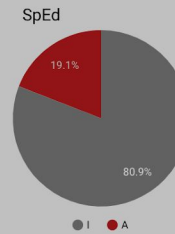
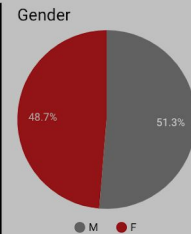
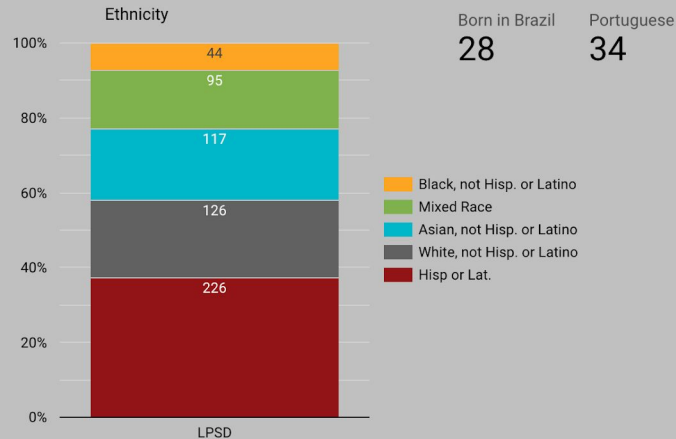
McKinney-Vento: Y

(1)

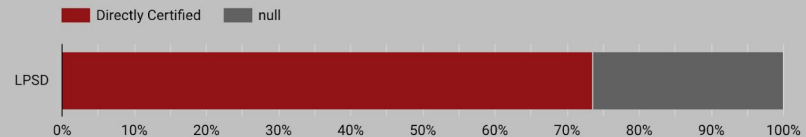
Students

608

20/21 Demographics

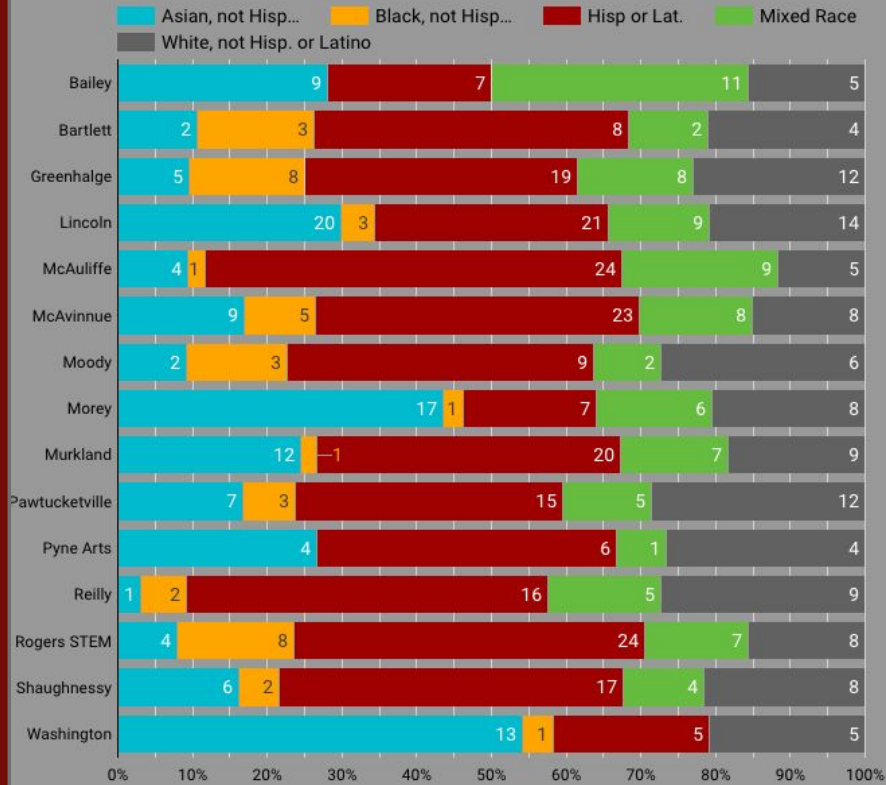


Socio-Economic

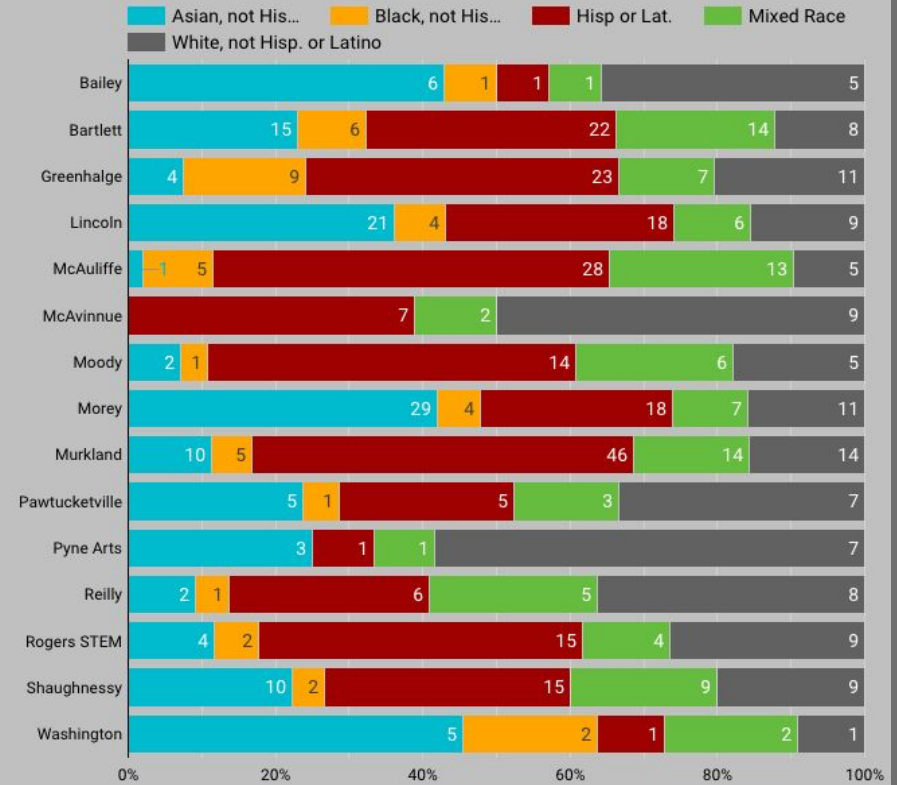


McKinney Vento Disaggregated Data

Current 2020-21 Enrollment



Projected Enrollment Based on School-Home Proximity



Economic Demographic Data



Pre-K to 4 Parent School Study

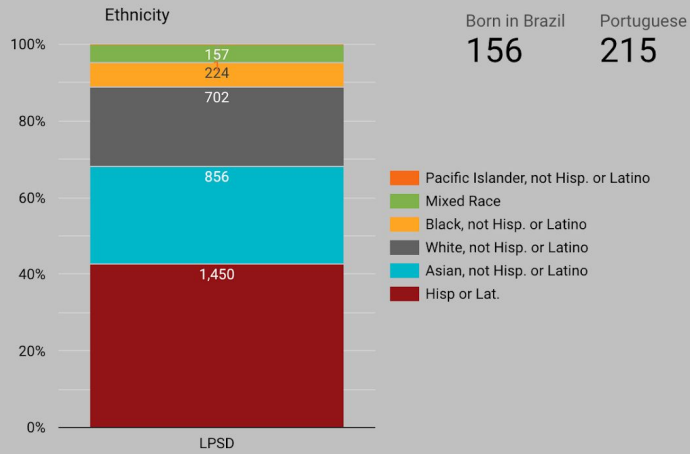
21/22 GR

Socio-Economic: Directly Certifi... (1)

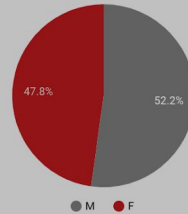
McKinney-Vento

Students
3,390

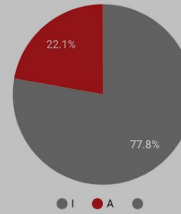
20/21 Demographics



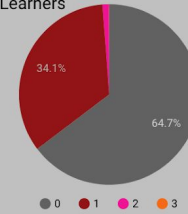
Gender



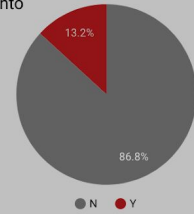
SpEd



English Learners



McKinney-Vento



Socio-Economic

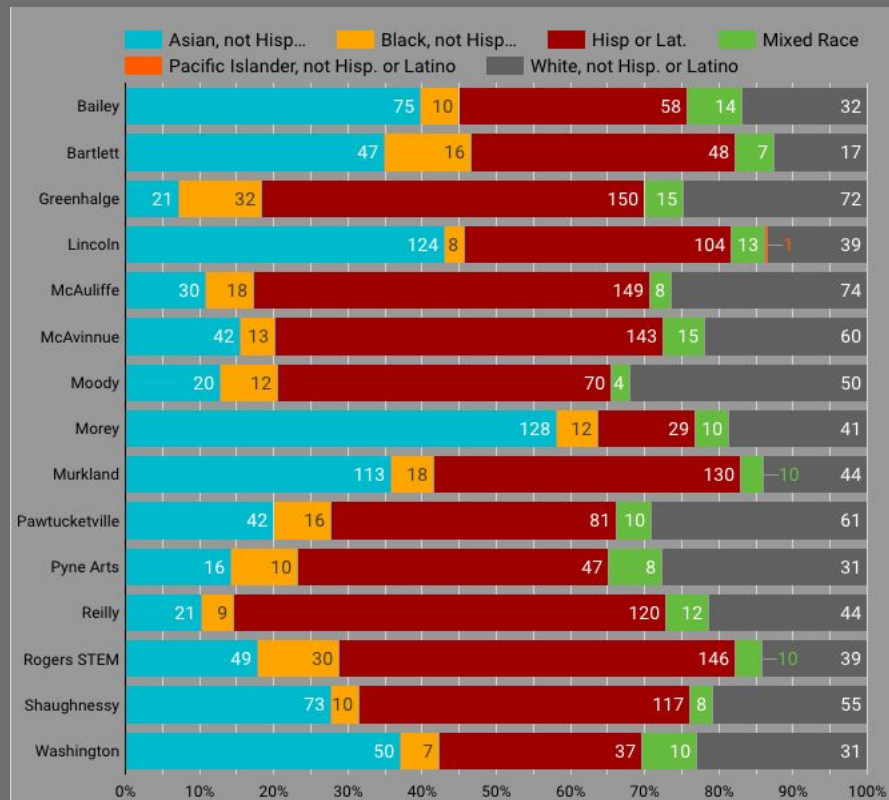
Directly Certified

LPSD

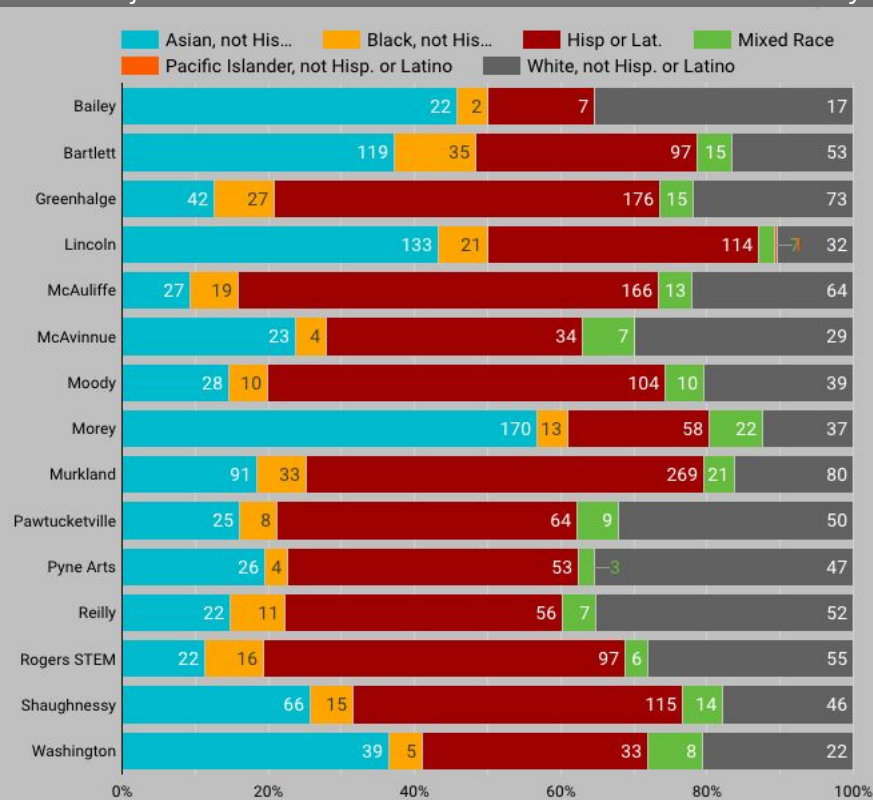
0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Economic Data Disaggregated

Current 2020-21 Enrollment



Projected Enrollment Based on School-home Proximity

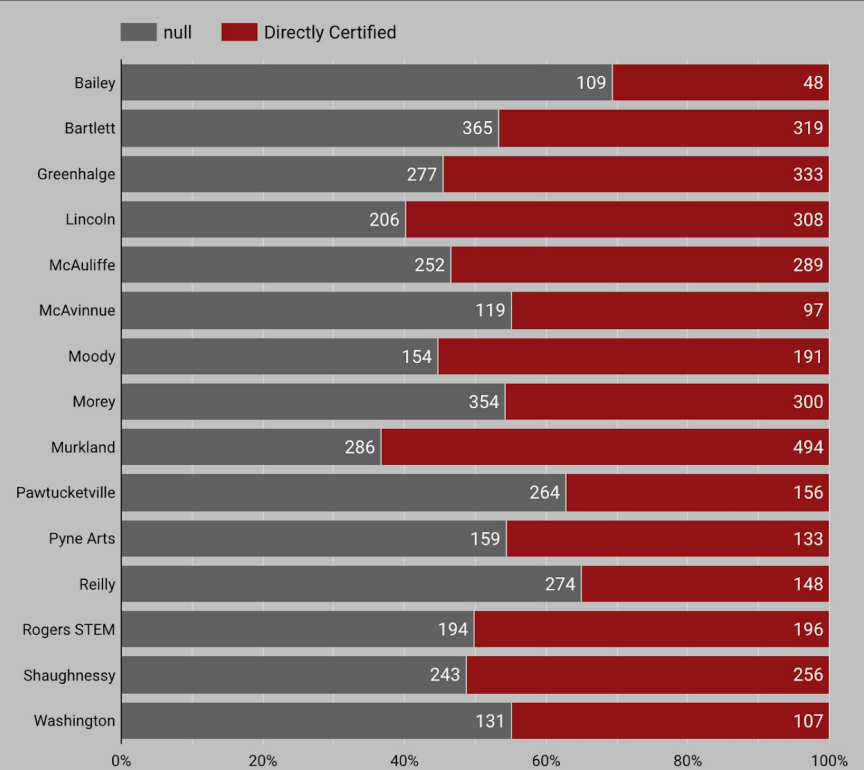
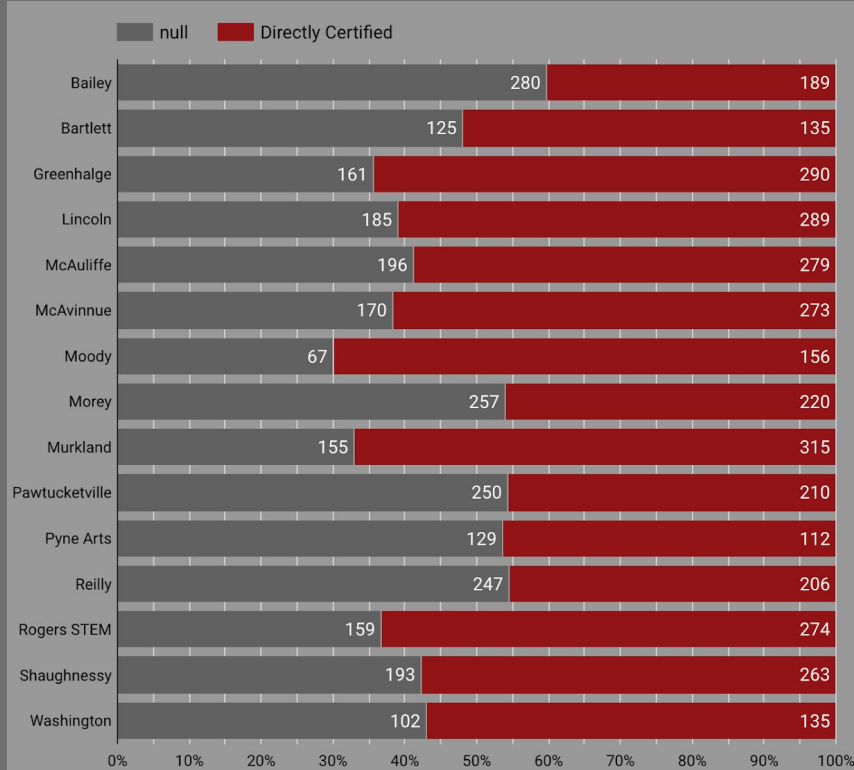


Economic Data of Students by School

*Direct Certification Replaces FRPL status

Current 2020-21 Enrollment

Projected Enrollment Based on School-home Proximity



School Assignment Findings Based on Review of K-4 Data

1. As pertains to the Voluntary Desegregation Plan, zone 1 and zone 2 fall within the racial balance of 62%-82% minority student enrollment (targeted 72% with +/- 10% above or below the 72%) for the broader elementary school population in both scenarios (*choice assignment vs proximity to school assignment*)
2. As relates to individual school racial balance (not a requirement of the de-seg plan), two schools' individual racial balance remain outside the parameters set in the Voluntary Desegregation Plan in both scenarios.
3. As relates to students identified for McKinney Vento services, some schools continue to have higher percentages of McKinney Vento students than other schools due to the following factors:
 - locations of shelters
 - socio economics of the neighborhood
 - doubled-up families
4. As relates to economic data, some schools' economic balance will exceed the district average of 50% student population identified as high needs based on direct certification, (replaced free and reduced price lunch data process)

K-4 Data Analysis and Learnings

1. Given the large percentage of students of color in the district, most schools will remain racially diverse (as defined by the voluntary desegregation plan) regardless of placement by choice or placement driven by proximity to a student's home.
2. Facility capacity (under enrollment and over enrollment) will be a challenge in some neighborhoods and schools. Thus single school assignment based on proximity would exacerbate this problem; whereas clusters of schools and more compact zones could alleviate over and under enrollment in schools with capacity challenges.
3. A two mile walk zone may be “walk-able” by the state’s definition. However, it impacted family’s ability to accept in person learning assignments in the absence of transportation, notably English Learners who were given priority status within the return to school lottery but didn’t qualify for transportation services (as compared to Special Education students and McKinney Vento students with transportation options stipulated within federal law). Thus, equitable school assignment would be better served through the district’s transportation policy versus state law.

K-4 Data Analysis and Learnings (Cont.)

- As pertains to English Learners, ELs are not evenly placed across the district.
- Language groups vary by schools
- The concentration of language/ethnic/racial groups within neighborhoods may impact placement/school data:
 - Acre - Latino/Hispanic and Asian
 - Back Central - Latino/Hispanic and low incident groups
 - Belvidere - White
 - Centralville - Latino/Hispanic, White and low incident language groups
 - Downtown - Latino/Hispanic and low incident language groups
 - Highlands - Asian and White
 - Lower Belvidere - Latino/Hispanic
 - Lower Highlands - Asian
 - Pawtucketville - Indian and White
 - Sacred Heart - Brazilian/Portuguese, Latino/Hispanic and White
 - South Lowell - Brazilian/Portuguese
- There are currently no self-contained SLIFE/newcomer programs at the elementary level. Students are placed based on availability of seats and ESL staffing.

K-4 Data Analysis and Learnings - Families in Shelters (Cont.)

- As of today the district has 254 students in its shelter system. These students tend to largely live within a couple of neighborhoods (Centerville and the Acre). To that end, the number of McKinney-Vento students would significantly increase at the Bartlett, Murkland, and Greenhalge. Conversely, the number of McKinney-Vento students would dramatically decrease at McAvinnue, Pawtucketville, Reilly, and Washington.
- McKinney-Vento shelter families, in particular, have no say in their residential placement. Therefore, implementing an equitable placement protocol based on proximity to one's domicile would require intentional policy language providing flexibilities for inclusion of other factors that would determine school assignment of a child living in a shelter.
- It must also be acknowledged that students in shelters may be relocated to a new shelter assignment at any time through no fault of their own. Whether in the shelter system or not, and especially during the current COVID pandemic, the McKinney-Vento population tends to be transient, so the concept of a school in proximity to their shelter holds less significance for them. Many of these families will relocate several times during a student's enrollment period. (Due to Government implementation of shelter living mandates)
- Transportation flexibilities must also be considered for this group of students. Most McKinney-Vento families do not have their own transportation and school attendance can be impacted by the length of a walk zone (ie the recent 2 mile walk zone) especially where parents may have to “transport” multiple school aged children in the AM and PM.

Ongoing Data Analysis

Ongoing work is being conducted in the following areas:

- How the elementary feeder pattern impacts middle school assignment along the lines of race, culture, language, economics and McKinney Vento status of students
- Opportunities and challenges of assignment policy on EL student placement
 - Identifying Brazilian students - which is our largest growing student population
- Mobility data and school assignment trends of enrollments post early registration
- Whether clustering of schools can result in greater socio-economic integration
- How un-assigning students to the 4 city-wide/magnet schools as a “parent school” impacts the enrollment within the remaining 11 regular elementary programs
- Equitable staffing, programming and resources across schools

Emerging Policy Considerations

- What specialized programs currently exist in the district or might be developed that appeal to a broad range of families - thus impacting the opportunity to attract greater socio-economic diversity?
(ie. technology, arts, dual language, Montessori, community school model, etc.)
- In what ways could the current “choice system” of assignment be improved to yield more equitable and integrated student populations?
(ie. weighted lottery based on factors other than just sibling preference such as economic status, language needs, special needs, parent’s education level. Different neighborhoods could also be considered in city-wide/magnet school lotteries and admission.)

Emerging Policy Considerations (Cont.)

- How might redrawn attendance zone boundaries that include a small cluster of schools create an economically diverse student population?
- In what ways should encourage intra-district transfers as a method of school choice?
- How might we expand and prioritize the integration of curricula which reflects the needs of a school's culturally and economically diverse student body (classroom level)?
- How might the district partner with community and governmental agencies to review inclusionary zoning policies that result in mixed-income, economically integrated neighborhoods (community impact) ?

Examples from Other Districts Relating to Policies to Better Integrate Student Populations

Stamford Public Schools (CT) - “Draws its attendance zone boundaries so that all schools are within 10 percentage points of the district’s average share of “educationally disadvantaged” students. The district identifies students as educationally disadvantaged if they qualify for free- or reduced-price lunch, live in public housing, or are English Language Learners. The district also has a strong magnet program and a weighted lottery system to achieve its diversity goals”

Berkeley Unified School District (CA) implemented a controlled choice system. “Its student assignment plan allows parents to rank-order their first-choice, second-choice, and third-choice schools, considering a number of factors in the assignment process such as parent’s level of education, income, and primary language spoken at home. The district is also divided into three large elementary school zones. Using these zones, the parents’ stated preferences, and their diversity factors, Berkeley Unified assigns its roughly 10,000 students to schools in a way that ensures students from all socioeconomic zones are evenly represented in each school. This policy has created a remarkably high degree of student integration and could serve as a model for other interested districts.”

Examples from Other Districts Relating to Policies to Better Integrate Student Populations

Cambridge Public Schools (MA) “pioneered a model in 1980 with the intent of racial desegregation. In 2001, however, the district reshaped their goals toward socioeconomic diversity due to the increasing number of court decisions prohibiting the voluntary use of race in school admissions. The district now reserves a share of seats at each school for low-income students, as measured by a student’s free or reduced-price lunch eligibility.”

Denver Public Schools (CO) “prioritized seating at 20 low-poverty schools for low-income students, and it recently opened a comprehensive high school that reserves a third of available seats for students residing in high-poverty neighborhoods. In 2012, Denver launched the first unified enrollment system for all traditional public and charter schools in the district. The district also redrew its attendance zone boundaries so that enrollment zones spanned neighborhoods of diverse socioeconomic backgrounds.”

Select General Findings on Impacts of Racial or Economic Segregation of Student Populations

- Most parents support school diversity, but reject options that they perceive limits their educational options for their children or reduces school quality.
- The public is not always aware of the shared benefits for low-income and high-income students in attending economically diverse schools.
- Students from neighborhoods where residents work in “high prestige” occupations have better educational outcomes and fewer risky behaviors.
- Black and Hispanic children attending racially isolated schools often suffer from less adequate resources, including less experienced teachers.
- Intentional measures must be taken within cities, districts, schools and classrooms to foster the environment and processes needed in order to reap the full benefits of diversity.

Community Engagement

Input we would seek to gather through multiple measures such as survey, focus group, community forum:

- Families' understanding and commitment level to racial and economic diversity and the impacts of racial and economic integration policies on "choice" options
- Families' current satisfaction with their access to school choice and their assignment within the current process
- Families' input on how zone changes (if proposed following additional data review) might impact their children and family

Process Steps

Learnings of Current Year

Review of temporary policy for Kindergarten students that was implemented for 2020-21

- Racial Diversity
- Socio-economic Diversity
- School Enrollment

Study of Current Student Body

Review current LPS student home addresses and zones to inform future projections

- Racial Diversity
- Socio-economic Diversity
- School Enrollment
- Magnet Schools and City-wide School Options
- Transportation

Community Outreach

- Conduct family survey
- Provide findings of study and survey results to families and community members
- Listening and Feedback Sessions

Recommended Timeline – Reports and Activities

Review of Report of Learnings of Current Year

Subcommittee Meeting, January 11-15

Review of Projection Report (using current student addresses to project future enrollment trends and patterns)

Subcommittee Meeting, January 25-29

Community Engagement

Conduct family survey in January

Provide findings of study and survey results to families and community members via zoom sessions and gather input, February 1-12

Review of Community Engagement Input Sessions

Subcommittee Meeting, February 16-23

Final Policy Changes Made and Policy Adopted,

Regular School Committee Meeting, by March 3, 2021

Questions for Discussion

Based on what was presented today, what additional questions do you have or would you propose to help guide our analysis of the current assignment policy?

What recommendations do you have for additional activities and reports that should be generated which will help us analyze our current policy and inform policy changes?

What recommendations do you have regarding the community engagement timeline and proposed content and topics for discussion?